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U. S. Department of Agriculture

*STERLING'S*

*FIG  
ORCHARDS,  
INC.*

Crisfield, Maryland



## DEPENDABLE

DEPENDABLE is the word that best describes a fig tree.

Easy to grow.

Produces abundantly.

Hardy.

Requires no spraying.

Long productive life.

Early ripening after planting.

Beautiful in all seasons.

Quality Fig Trees For The Homegrounds and Orchard.

STERLING'S FIG ORCHARDS, INC.

P. O. Box 626

Crisfield, Maryland

Tel. No. 278-R



# OUR FIG TREES ARE

*Profitable*

*Easy to  
Grow*

*Productive First  
Year*

*Insect Free*

*Require  
Little  
Care*



*Magnolia fig trees from our orchards planted by the south wall of the Washington Senators' Baseball Stadium. They produce abundant crops of excellent fruit, and have been injured by cold only once in 15 years.*

## FIG TREES ARE THE MOST DEPENDABLE BEARING FRUIT TREES FOR THE HOMEGROUNDS

EARLY HISTORY — Fig trees have been grown on the east coast beginning with early colonial settlements in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia, and many of these early planted trees are still producing excellent crops of delicious fruit.

Islands in Chesapeake Bay, no longer inhabited, have fig trees producing good crops. The Early Violet variety, abandoned to its own resources, is often found doing fairly well in competition with wild growth. Bordering on the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries and following south throughout the coastal regions to Florida, will be found fig trees that have existed for upwards of 200 years. Because of their inherent nature of continuous renewal of root branch, they not only have survived all of these years but have increased in size and productiveness.

That some of these early planted varieties are still considered among the best adapted to the region is not accidental, but due to the fact that they had already proven their adaptability to the colder climates when brought in by the early colonists.

THE FIG IN CRISFIELD, MARYLAND — Probably the most outstanding example of successful fig growing in the colder climates is right here in Crisfield.

Conservative estimates place the number of bearing trees in Crisfield and surrounding communities at 2500. This does not include our commercial orchards. Many of the trees are more than 100 years old, and have increased in productiveness as they have widened their bases into more fruit bearing branches. There are numerous varieties, with Brown Turkey and Early Violet predominating.

The trees are found in all sorts of locations in the homegrounds; at the kitchen door, in the front yard, and along fences and outbuildings. With their distinctive foliage and colorful bark in summer, and clean gray bark in winter, they lend charm and beauty to their surroundings. No other plant can utilize the odd nooks and corners to such good advantage.

GROWING FIG TREES IN THIS COMMUNITY DURING THE PAST 200 YEARS HAS BEEN SUCH AN ACCEPTED AND NATURAL THING TO DO, THE FACT THAT THEY ARE CLASSIFIED AS A SEMI-TROPICAL FRUIT IS NEVER CONSIDERED. THEY ARE AS MUCH AT HOME HERE AS THEY ARE IN THEIR NATIVE LANDS.

THE ACCOMPLISHED FACT OF SUCCESSFUL PRODUCTION OF FIGS HERE IS CONCLUSIVE PROOF THAT FIG TREES OF THE RIGHT VARIETY WILL THRIVE AND BEAR ABUNDANTLY IN THE COLDER CLIMATES.



## FIGS CAN BE GROWN IN YOUR COMMUNITY

The possibilities of the culture of fig trees in your community can only be appreciated by a comparison of the climatic conditions existing in your community with those existing here in our orchards at Crisfield, Maryland. The following temperature data are taken from the **1941 Yearbook of Agriculture**, entitled "**Climate and Man**", published by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Years covered are 1899-1938.

Locality	Killing Frosts		Growing	January	Minimum	Length Of
			Days	Average	All Time	Record
New York, N. Y.	April 9	Nov. 6	211	32.1	14	40 Years
Flushing, L. I.	April 12	Nov. 2	204	31.7	14	23 Years
Atlantic City,	April 6	Nov. 7	215	34.8	9	40 Years
Cape May, N. J.	April 8	Nov. 12	218	34.9	3	33 Years
Philadelphia, Pa.	April 5	Nov. 2	211	34.4	11	40 Years
Baltimore, Md.	April 8	Nov. 2	208	35.5	7	40 Years
Solomons, Md.	April 8	Nov. 7	213	36.9	5	40 Years
Annapolis, Md.	April 10	Nov. 1	205	35.3	6	40 Years
Cambridge, Md.	April 14	Nov. 31	200	36.7	6	40 Years
Takoma, near Wash., D.C.	April 15	Nov. 27	195	33.3	10	40 Years
Crisfield, Md.	April 9	Nov. 7	212	38.8	5	19 Years

It is not meant to imply from this table that the climate of Philadelphia, for example, is as well adapted for growing figs as that of Crisfield and many other points in Chesapeake Bay region and further south. However, they can be grown successfully out of doors in any locality having around 200 growing days. They are grown with excellent success in Washington, D. C. without any winter protection. They are rarely injured by cold there, (probably once in 10 to 15 years) and then some fruit usually ripens the same year with normal production thereafter.



## DEPENDABLE — CAREFREE

The 2,500 fig bushes growing in this community produce large quantities of fine fruit. Many of the bushes, due to their more favorable environment, produce very large crops of the finest quality. Rarely, if ever, is any attention given to these trees. They are planted; the fruit is gathered; pruning keeps them within bounds.

## OLD SHOES

One grower in Crisfield informed us that old shoes were responsible for the exceptional growth and production of one of her fig trees. It is a beautiful specimen and most productive, producing at least two bushels of fruit yearly. There were several pairs of old shoes, and other objects, in various states of decomposition resting among and around the 15 to 20 branches forming the bush. Fig bushes have always been tempting places to CHUNK most anything that needs covering UP. We know that anything, NEW or OLD, placed around fig trees, helping to conserve moisture while disintegrating into humus, is highly beneficial. Duplicating the soil conditions of dooryard trees is one secret of successful fig growing. These conditions are: MOISTURE, GOOD DRAINAGE, HUMUS, FERTILITY. Two or three sacks full of pine straw (needles) makes an ideal mulch, and looks well.

## FIRST AND SECOND YEARS

A well rooted fig tree, or bush, once planted will take care of itself. Most varieties, in their first year continue their lush growth until late in the fall, and are vulnerable to severe cold spells that hit before the wood has hardened off. The first year wood can be protected by placing a cover over the bush when severe cold threatens. They must be uncovered the next morning and the protection repeated until the leaves have fallen and wood hardened, at which time the bush may be covered for the winter. The second year's wood growth will, in normal seasons, harden and mature before the temperature gets low enough to cause damage.

During about the first five years fig trees become progressively more resistant to cold damage. In our orchards we make no attempt to protect young trees. They usually ripen some fruit the first year, and we believe that they ripen as much the second year whether or not the first year's wood growth is damaged by frost or cold. Letting nature take its course in our orchards develops a bush form earlier, which is the most desirable method of growing figs in this section of the country.

This description of growing figs in their first and second years is for the guidance of those who have had no experience with them. We suggest that no protection south of Baltimore be practiced, except mulching around the base.



*The photograph shows one of our Green Ischia orchid. Little care is necessary to raise fig trees of this size, bearing luxuriant foliage and abundant crops.*

## CLIMATIC CONDITIONS LITTLE HINDRANCE TO FIGS

Gustav Eisen, Ph. D. in **"The Fig, Its History, Culture, and Curing,"** published by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, states with respect to fig culture in cold climates:

"Although fig culture will always be carried on most successful and profitably in semi-tropical climates as at present, the fig tree readily accommodates itself to less favorable regions and may be grown in many other localities. It appears that the real barriers to fig culture are short and cold summers. With warm days and long summers, such as are found in North America and central parts of Asia, a successful culture of figs might be accomplished even with rigorous winters. \*\*\* There is no doubt that figs producing the first crop for the table could be grown profitably over a vast area of central North America and Europe in places where this delicious fruit is now entirely unknown in its fresh state. \*\*\*

"The climatic conditions under which the cultivated fig will thrive and bear fruit are less restricted than those which favor or disfavor many other fruits. What other fruit can be grown out-of-doors with moderate success through a district ranging from the south of Scotland to the Cape of Good Hope, from the shores of the Atlantic through Europe and Asia to China, from Chile to California and Oregon, and on the eastern coast as far north as Washington, D. C."



## DESCRIPTION OF VARIETIES

### *EARLY VIOLET*

We believe this to be the hardiest fig grown. Fruit small, round, skin shades of violet, pulp light strawberry. Dries on tree and is delicious to eat raw. Ideal for preserving with skins. Its fruiting capacity is limited only by the extent of new wood growth, and this depends upon moisture and nutrition. Ripens continuously about the middle of July through September. No first crop.



*The Early Violet above was photographed during the winter of 1950, showing its adaptability to the homegrounds.*



## *BROWN TURKEY*

Most commonly grown in the colder climates. Compact growth, dense wood, next to Early Violet in cold hardiness. In mild winters with no late killing frost in spring, produce fair quantity first crop. Second crop medium to large, and very prolific. Both crops fine and sweet with excellent flavor. Preserves to golden color when peeled. Color variable shades of brown, light to dark — light strawberry pulp.

First crop ripens the first week in July, second crop second week in July till late October. Usually ripens fruit the first year planted.

*One year branch from tree in our orchards. Brown Turkey.*

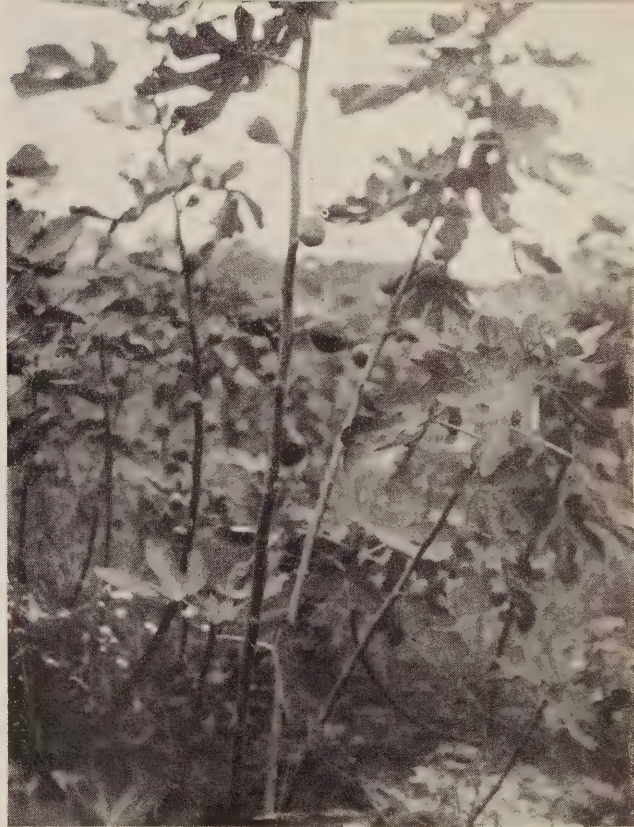


*Fig tree from our orchards of Brown Turkey (Eastern) variety grown from an 18" single stem, photographed 18 months after planting. To induce clump formation, tree was planted one inch lower than nursery mark, and pruned level with the soil.*

## BRUNSWICK

Not a very cold-hardy fig. Not recommend for planting north of Washington, D.C. Will make a growth from the ground of six feet or more in a season, and will set and ripen good crops even if pruned or frozen to the ground. Fruit is large, long, pear shaped, purplish black. Good quality. Does not hold its shape in preserving, is dark unless peeled. Ripens September 1st through October and frequently until late in November.

*Brunswick rooted cutting showing one season's growth with ripening fruit.*





## GREEN ISCHIA

Rank grower yet very hardy. Best flavored of all cold-hardy figs. Medium to large fruit, spherical, light green skin, crimson pulp. Unequaled for eating raw. Preserves good quality but does not hold shape well. Bears well but splits in humid weather. In most seasons will produce bountiful crop of perfect fruit. Ripens August 15 till frost. Average season will ripen delicious figs till Thanksgiving Day.

*Green Ischia grown in single standard form, showing heavy fruiting habit.*



## *CELESTE*

A dooryard favorite throughout the south for many years. It compares with the Brown Turkey in hardiness, and should do well without protection as far north as Baltimore.

Fruit small, pear shaped, violet purple skin, light strawberry pulp. Dries on tree and is one of the best for eating raw. Delicious preserved with skins.

Tree grows large but may be kept within bounds by careful pruning without effecting quality or quantity of fruit.

Ripens continuously beginning about July 15th through September.

## **VARIETIES BEST ADAPTED TO THE EASTERN COASTAL REGION**

In size, color, fruiting habits, quality, growth and formation of trees, cold-hardiness, fig trees probably vary more than peaches, apples, pears, and other fruit trees. These variations are most important and determine which varieties can be grown successfully under different climatic conditions.

Early Violet, Brown Turkey, Celeste, Green Ischia, Brunswick, are stated in the order of cold-hardiness. However, there is little difference between the first four named in this respect.

The Brunswick fig is unusual in many respects. It is the largest fig grown, and produces the largest tonnage per acre. Our experience shows it to be the most dependable in setting fruit, whether it is pruned, frozen to the ground, or left to develop normally. We find it most dependable when pruned a few inches above the ground and protected with several inches of straw mulch. Once established it will always produce big crops of good quality fruit.

BRUNSWICK in the south-eastern United States is the same variety that is generally known in California as Brown Turkey (San Piero, Negro Largo, San Pedro Black).

In a treatise on the nomenclature of this fig by Dr. Ira J. Condit\* published in Vol. 44, 1944 of American Society for Horticultural Science, he describes some of its characteristics as follows:

\*"The usual practice in California is to prune the tree back every winter to short stubs and thus secure vigorous suckers on which second-crop figs are produced abundantly."

\*"No other fig commonly grown equals the San Piero in size. Few if any will produce greater tonnage per unit of ground space than trees of this variety."

\*Dr. Ira J. Condit is Professor of Subtropical Horticulture, University of California, Citrus Experiment Station, Riverside, California.

## **BUSH OR TREE**

In this climate it is advantageous to grow fig trees in bush or clump form. It is their natural way of growing, and they will eventually assume this form anyway. Fruit-bearing wood composes a larger proportion of the tree when in bush form, and it is nearer to the source of moisture and soil nutrition.

## **ROOTS**

The condition of the roots of any nursery stock is most important. It is of primary importance with fig trees because drying out damages their roots beyond recovery. Our fig trees are not dug and stored as is customary with most nursery stock. Until the day they are shipped to you, they are stored in the only place that protects their vitality, and that is in the ground where they are grown. Furthermore, they are hand dug to insure the minimum loss of roots; they are then protected with wet sacks from the field to the packing shed, where they are carefully packed in peat moss. They will reach you full rooted, healthy, vigorous, ready for quick growth and production. These methods, based on long experience, insure success in planting.

## **SHIPPING**

Depending upon weather conditions, shipping will start in March and continue through May 15th. Wet soil may sometimes delay shipping a few days.





*Brown Turkey first crop figs in our orchards which set the previous fall. When not winter injured or damaged by late spring frosts they ripen large size figs of delicious flavor. The second crop set in the axils of the leaves as the branch grows, and ripen progressively.*

## GROWING REQUIREMENTS

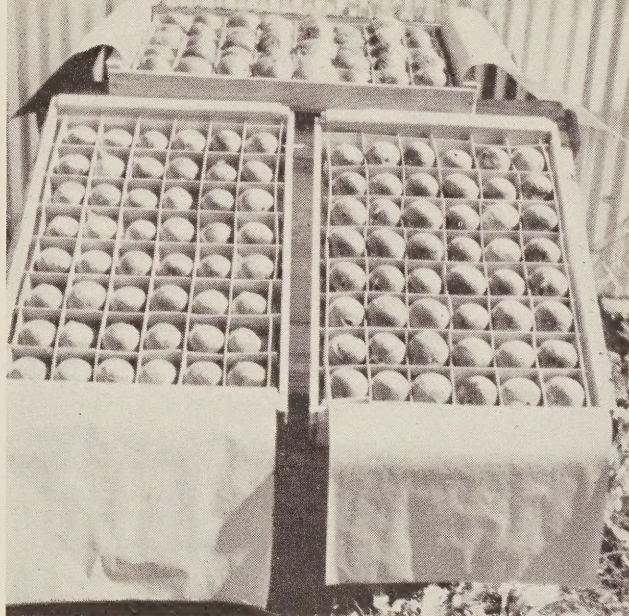
1. **SOIL**—Fig trees are not exacting as to soil requirements. They will grow rapidly and produce well on any fairly rich garden soil, light or heavy.
2. **SUN**—Sunny locations are best.
3. **EXPOSURE**—The south side of buildings or fences furnishing a break against north winds is of distinct advantage. The hardy varieties are rarely injured by cold in Chesapeake Bay regions as far north as Matapeake-Annapolis. From Annapolis north to Long Island, the trees can be easily protected from extreme cold snaps if \* proper precautions are taken.
4. **SPRAYING**—NO SPRAYING IS REQUIRED. Keeping fruit picked before it is overripe avoids most damage by fruit flies and birds. JAPANESE BEETLES WILL NOT TOUCH FIG TREES.
5. **LIFE**—Once established and given reasonable care, the productive life of a fig tree is practically unlimited. This is due to its habit of continuous renewal of root and branch. The roots are cold-hardy, and if the tree is frozen to the ground in a severe winter, it will grow from three to six feet the following season and produce a crop of figs.
6. **PRODUCTIVITY**—All of our varieties produce abundant crops of figs. Brunswick and Brown Turkey ripen fruit 17 months after propagating a cutting.

\* COMPLETE CULTURAL INSTRUCTIONS FURNISHED WITH EACH  
SHIPMENT

Our trees are all started in growth. Each tree stands 11/2 - 21/2 feet high when shipped from our nurseries.

They frequently ripen fruit the first year planted, and increase in productiveness thereafter.

Our trees are all field grown right here in Crisfield, Maryland. We believe that fig trees propagated in a climate comparable to that in which they are to be grown have the distinct advantage of being acclimated. Furthermore, they are free from diseases that are prevalent in the warmer climates.



*Brown Turkey from our orchard packed for shipment. Photographed in October 1949.*

The photograph at the right is another example of the early fruiting habits of the fig tree.

The photographs shown throughout this booklet are typical examples of thousands of fig trees that may be found from Long Island south along the Atlantic Coast.



*Brown Turkey 18 months after propagation, showing ripe fruit of good size and quality.*



## VARIETIES — PRICES PER TREE DELIVERED PARCEL POST

Brown Turkey (Eastern)

Brunswick (San Piero, Negro Largo, San Pedro Black, Brown Turkey (Calif.)

Green Ischia

Celeste

Early Violet

	1	2 - 5	Over 5
2 yr. 1½'—2'	<u>1.50</u>	<u>1.30</u>	<u>1.10</u>
2 yr. 2'—3'	1.75	1.40	1.20

### 1 YR. & 2 YR. PRUNED FOR GROWING IN BUSH OR CLUMP FORM:

To induce bush or clump formation, these trees are pruned for planting level with the soil. We believe that better and quicker results are obtained by this method.

Savings in packing and shipping expenses are reflected in these prices.

	1	2 - 5	Over 5
1 yr. 2'—3'	<u>1.25</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>.80</u>
2 yr. 2'—3'	1.60	1.25	1.00

### EARLY ORDERING

May we suggest that your order be placed early. The trees will then be on hand to suit your convenience in planting. They will be packed to keep several weeks, however, if not planted within one week, it is suggested that water be poured into the packing without unwrapping. Trees should be kept in a cool place and protected against very low temperatures.

## COMMERCIAL PLANTING — MARKETING

We believe that small acreages of the right variety of figs near large cities or on main traveled highways should be very profitable. Methods of packing to carry fresh figs to distant markets are very expensive, and for this reason local growers will not likely have much real competition, either in price or quality.

If interested in orchard planting, please write for special prices.

STERLING'S FIG ORCHARDS, INC.

P. O. Box 626

Crisfield, Maryland

Tel. No. 278-R